

**Summary of the
NELAC *Ad Hoc* Transition Committee Meeting
March 27, 1997**

The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference *Ad Hoc* Transition Committee convened by teleconference on Thursday, March 27, 1997. Ms. Carol Batterton, Chair of the Committee, led the meeting. A list of participants is given in Attachment A and a list of Action Items is listed as Attachment B. Materials distributed to Committee members were the Agenda, Topics for *Ad Hoc* Transition Committee, and an document titled 'Addressing NELAC Implementation Concerns'.

Ms. Batterton opened the meeting by having the participants introduce themselves and briefly tell why they had been selected to be on the Committee. Ms. Batterton continued by stating that NELAC has enjoyed a good reputation and is now facing a critical step in just how it was to be implemented. It is the Transition Committee's responsibility to have plans in place for a smooth transition to the implementation phase.

The Committee brain stormed in order to augment the issues that had been identified earlier by Ms. Batterton in Attachment C. The following comments were made by Committee members:

- Dr. Ken Jackson stated that it was important to see what the application process will involve; i.e., how will it be reviewed, who will review it, and what will the process be.
- Mr. Jerry Parr stated that the initial accrediting authorities offer programs that would ideally have a comprehensive scope.
- Ms. Ann Rosecrance referenced the American Petroleum Institute's PET laboratory accreditation process. She is to contact them and get information on the process they used in implementing their accreditation.
- Dr. Ken Jackson saw a need to address how "reciprocity" was going to work; i.e., would MOU's or other methods be used? Also, how will the primary accrediting authority notify the secondary authority? A discussion ensued of the possibly of creating a Web Page to notify the public, but the decision was that the national database should serve that function.
- Dr. Jackson queried whether once an accrediting authority is approved, will the laboratories in that state be automatically judged to be NELAC compliant.
- Ms. Mourrain suggested that the Committee consider the idea of concurrent approval for the accreditation of the accrediting authorities and the laboratories in the different states. This could be a two-step process (1) giving the states a certain date to apply and then (2) giving the laboratories a date to apply.

- Dr. Hartwig asked how many laboratories were expected to apply for accreditation. It was the general consensus that most of the approximately 1200 commercial laboratories in the nation would want NELAC accreditation. Therefore, it was estimated that the total number of laboratories seeking accreditation in any first round would be close to 1000.
- Dr. Hartwig also asked about assessor training. Ms. Mourrain stated that it would be some time before trained assessors are in place. They will be developing expertise in the beginning. It was suggested that current assessors might formulate a program for review. Also, the assessor training guide was suggested for the states to assure uniformity of assessment. Another suggestion was that the state assessors accompany one another during the initial phase.
- Ms. Mourrain lead a discussion on the time line of the step process of accreditation. It was agreed that more time was needed to plan this issue before implementation.
- Mr. Andy Easton, Ms. Rosecrance, and Mr. Parr expressed the laboratories' concern that there be equal access to the initial accrediting authorities to assure that some laboratories aren't disenfranchised. This means that the timing must be coordinated for the entry of all the states and the accreditation of the laboratories.
- A discussion of fees ensued. Ms. Mourrain stated that the setting of fees was not the domain of NELAC. It was suggested, however, that NELAC might provide a forum for discussion of fees. There was a general acknowledgment that fees were a concern.
- The issue of reciprocity and the potential for state supplemental requirements was also a major concern for the laboratory representatives.
- The accrediting authority and the requirements of the secondary authority versus the primary authority was discussed.
- The laboratories also expressed concern regarding the status of the current performance evaluation (PE) program for drinking water and wastewater. Ms. Mourrain stated that the Agency has decided to externalize the program and is working with NIST to perform the oversight function for PE's.

The next conference call will focus on the timing issue.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
NELAC AD HOC TRANSITION COMMITTEE
March 27, 1997

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ACTION ITEMS
NELAC *Ad Hoc* Transition Committee
March 27, 1997

Name	Action	Date Completed
Ann Rosecrance	Ms. Rosecrance is to contract the American Petroleum Institute regarding the process of their accreditation of the PET laboratory.	



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National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference

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TOPICS FOR AD HOC TRANSITION COMMITTEE

I. Approval of accrediting authorities

- How do we ensure that first accrediting authorities approved do not get swamped with applications?
- How will we deal with timing the initial accreditation of labs?
- Should EPA do a “pilot program” for approving accrediting authorities?
- When will applications/checklists be available for potential accrediting authorities?

II. Proficiency test samples

- What will be acceptable on an interim basis prior to the development of a national program in conformance with the standards proposed in Chapter 2?

III. Assessor Training

- What will be acceptable on an interim basis in the absence of a NELAP approved program?

IV. Fees

- How will NELAC assure consistency/reasonableness in accreditation and reciprocity fees?

V. Accreditation of state labs

- What will be the role of the EPA Regions in accrediting state labs?
- How many state labs will EPA accredit?